

Ford Site Planning Task Force
March 19, 2007
Lumen Christi Catholic Church

Meeting #4 Summary

[Approved by Task Force April 16, 2007, one Task Force member opposed.]

Ford Site Planning Task Force members present: Carole Faricy, Co-Chair, William Klein, Co-Chair, Peter Armstrong, Shawn Bartsh, James Bricher, Richard Broderick, Terri Dooher Fleming, David Drach, Charles Hathaway, Deborah Karasov, Angela Kline, Gary Marx, Dennis Rosemark, Matthew Schuerger, Dave Selligren, Stuart Simek, Morgan Tamsky, Bruce Valen, Stephanie Warne, Pamela Wheelock;
Absent: Ronnie Brooks, Lance Neckar, Ellen Watters; **Resigned:** Anthony Desnick

City Staff, others agency reps or consultants present: Cecile Bedor (PED), Merritt Clapp-Smith (PED), Luis Pereira (PED), Ward 3 Councilmember Pat Harris, John Marshall (Ward 3), Craig Sklenar, Deana Swetlik and Bill Vitek (EDAW), Bob Close and Bruce Jacobson (Close Landscape Architects), Tom Lincoln (URS), Fred Dock (Meyer Mohaddes), Pongsorn Khaw (ESG Architects), Monte Hilleman (Port Authority), Rodger Skare (Colliers), Gayle Summers (Highland District Council), Mike Kisch (Capstone), Ellen Heine (Capstone), Tamara Downs Schwei (Capstone), Tim Dykstal (Capstone), Jake Granholm (Capstone).

Others Attending (based on meeting sign-in sheet): Jane McClure (Villager), Tim Nelson (Pioneer Press), Mark Harstad (Chamber of Commerce), Claudia Dieter, Martin Grott, Lynn Hinkle, Charles Nelson, Dave Pinto

Meeting called to order by co-chair Bill Klein at 6:34 PM. Co-chair Klein asked for any corrections to the Draft Meeting #3 Summary. Task Force (TF) members requested several corrections, including that TF member Dave Selligren was absent at the last meeting, and that the date of the first public meeting should be corrected to read 3/20 (not 4/20). In addition, several TF members noted that the summary should state that Highland residents must be included explicitly on the list of core stakeholders. Klein asked if there were other requested changes to the Meeting Summary. Hearing none, the revised Summary was approved unanimously by the TF.

Co-chair Klein clarified a point of confusion from last meeting, regarding Ford allegedly taking the River property, located to the west of Mississippi Blvd, “off the table” from consideration. Ford had never had the “River property” up for consideration by this TF, and had always intended to sell this property as it currently is. Next, the co-chairs discussed how the stakeholder list would be amended to include not only Highland residents, but also large landowners near the Ford site, and representation from the West 7th/Ford Road Federation and Mac-Groveland council district.

Co-chair Klein regretfully announced that Anthony Desnick had resigned from the TF, citing health reasons and time needed for recovery. Finally, Klein requested that TF members reserve Wednesday, 4/11, from 5-7 PM, for a task force social.

Monte Hillman of the Port Authority introduced Rodger Skare, a representative of Colliers International, the firm contracted by the Port to do market analyses of the development scenarios to be produced by the TF. Jeff Patterson, the lead of the Colliers team, is out of town but will attend the next TF meeting. Colliers will be analyzing the capacity of the Ford site to absorb a range of housing types, light industrial, retail/commercial services, office space, and mixed use. Colliers will pursue an aggressive schedule, assessing demographics, market demand, previous studies, and the site’s redevelopment potential, including the feasibility of reusing existing buildings on the site. This analysis will be mindful of the City’s goals of maintaining city jobs and tax base, as well as more general goals of mitigating traffic, providing a better connection to the river, maximizing land value, and seeking the “highest and best use.” This information will be shared with and processed by EDAW, the Port Authority, the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), the TF, the private developer panels, and Ford’s real estate

analyst. At a future TF meeting, Colliers will give a preliminary presentation to the TF of the analyses to date. The TF then asked several questions:

- The timeframe of the environmental assessment -- Dave Sellergren, Ford representative on the TF, agreed to look into this. Cecile Bedor, director of PED, stated that phase II of the assessment would not coincide with the first phase of the TF's planning process, but that Ford's phase I environmental assessment would indicate the contamination "hotspots" on the site by late Spring 2007.
- An update on the historic preservation assessment -- Bedor answered that Ford has engaged a historic preservation consultant that has experience with the State's Historic Preservation Office, to assess the historic resources on the site.
- How the "top down" market data will relate to the "bottom up" visioning input; i.e. if the market data will limit the visioning of the TF. -- Rodger Skare responded that the market analysis would simply be a tool to help measure the different implications of the various scenarios envisioned. Deana Swetlik, consultant from EDAW, added that in the month between March 20 and April 16, the initial market data would be analyzed. Monte Hillman of the Port Authority stated that the market analysis does not intend to be prescriptive and limit the scenarios, but rather, the market segmentation data will provide a reality "test" for the scenarios. This data will help inform the "land carrying capacity" of the site, i.e. the types, mixtures, and densities of different land uses.

Next, Bill Vitek of EDAW reminded the TF of the first large public meeting the following evening (3/20). He stressed that this process would be iterative, and would produce a range of alternatives, both realistic and visionary. Deana Swetlik (EDAW) introduced an exercise in which the TF members would confirm the proposed goals and objectives, as well as look at the 3 proposed vision statements, (which the consultants produced by synthesizing the proposed vision statements of each TF member, informed by the Mayor's goals and previous brainstorming done by the TF). The proposed goal planning categories from EDAW were: 1) Character & Built Form, 2) Community Amenities & Open Space, 3) Land Use, 4) Economic Viability, 5) Policy (existing and proposed city policies/regulations), 6) Sustainability, and 7) Transport & Infrastructure Connectivity. Questions and comments from the TF included:

- If the consultants (EDAW) had "built-in" assumptions with these goal planning categories, i.e. "the site must be mixed use" or a single use, or "the site must be built to a certain density." Swetlik responded by saying there were no preconceived assumptions in these. A TF member indicated that she was concerned about the potential trap that in trying to accommodate all TF member opinions, the site would necessarily be pushed into a mixture of uses.
- That the vision statements already stated certain land uses, and that instead, the group should be defining broader principles.

The TF members then broke into 4 groups to analyze the proposed goal planning categories and the 3 draft vision statements. The aim was to identify what was missing from them or what needed to be added. The groups reconvened to report the following points back to the entire group:

Group 1

- The goal planning categories are ok as a checklist, but not as a roadmap
- "Character & Built Form" -- good
- The need to provide a vision that is adaptable
- Family-sustaining jobs are a key goal
- "Transport & Infrastructure Connectivity" goal -- did not like this; it seemed to assume more vehicular access to River Road, and preclude possibility of using this project as a way to promote non-vehicular transport (and ameliorate existing traffic)
- The goals should be principles, not suggest particular land uses
- The need for innovation and creativity
- A general dissatisfaction with the detailed objectives list
- Energy, sustainability, and connectivity are key themes, but the goals need to indicate a paradigm shift as fossil fuels are phased out

Group 2

- The vision statement should not constrain the range of possible alternatives

- A concern about the “Character & Built Form” category as potentially detracting from Downtown’s arts/culture element
- A question about defining Ford’s legacy: street names or a monument?
- What is an “urban forest”? Does providing for this preclude the potential for a Toyota to buy and reuse the plant?
- On “Economic Viability” – some scenarios may be “viable” only with public subsidy
- On traffic mitigation, the objectives seemed to constrain; Developers should address traffic problems. The question of who stands to benefit from traffic mitigation measures.
- A potential new goal planning category of “Uniqueness”?
- The goal of expanding the city’s tax base may be too narrow; how about *THE* tax base, more broadly?

Group 3

- The vision statements were too prescriptive for specific land uses
- Promoting environmental sustainability and the river corridor is irrespective of land use
- On “Transport...,” how might the site be used for transportation , not just as a way to provide connectivity. Parking problems, North-South and East-West connections, and the use of CP rail?
- How to define “new architectural precedents”, “...complement,” and “transition?”
- Does the “great streets” assertion apply to Highland?
- Proposed a new vision statement: “...Balance economic, social and environmental sustainability in the redevelopment of the Ford Site in a way that builds on the qualities and characteristics of the unique Highland Park neighborhood and River Valley Corridor in which it sits, while advancing the City’s economic wealth and community goals resulting in forward-thinking 21st Century development.”

Group 4

- The vision statements were too prescriptive for specific land uses
- The first line in proposed vision statement #1 was a good one to use
- Amendment to transitions: “smooth, respectful transitions.” Yet also “new and precedent-setting.”
- “Amenities & Open Space” should be a variety, including public art, pocket parks, trails, etc.
- Consider today’s tax base of the site, but also a goal to increase tax base of the surrounding area
- In reducing traffic impacts, there should be shared parking for various uses
- How does/will the Highland Plan interact with this plan?
- The limits of sustainability must be pushed – employ integrated energy systems on the site

Consultant Bill Vitek remarked on how he saw the groups talking, interacting, and trying to balance individual ideas with common goals/ideas, including the Mayor’s. He also stated that he thought he heard that no single alternative scenario was hoped for, but rather, an “approach.” Deana Swetlik said that she thought she heard that specific land uses ought to be eliminated from the vision statement. A TF member said that the TF should use the goal planning categories as dimensions within which each scenario is measured including “Economic Viability,” “Sustainability,” etc. In response to the small group input, consultant Bruce Jacobsen remarked that he thought the scenarios could be more “form-based,” rather than suggest particular uses. A TF member stated that this vision development process was necessarily messy, given the large size of the group and the great knowledge base among the TF members.

Homework assignments for the TF members included: 1) Picking one draft vision statement they liked the best, working on it, and sending it back to Merritt Clapp-Smith in one week (the consultants would synthesize these again, and present them back to the group); and 2) Revisiting the proposed goals/objectives and sending comments back to Merritt in two weeks. Deana Swetlik questioned whether the “Land Use” goal planning category should be retained at all, but the TF appeared unresolved on this point.

The proposed Critical Area Regulations were discussed again, and several TF members suggested that the TF formally ask the City to delay a designation for the Ford site. Upon motion made and seconded, by a vote of 12 to 4, the TF voted to ask the City Council and the Planning Commission for a delay. Co-chair Bill Klein indicated that he and Co-Chair Carole Faricy would send a letter to City Council President Kathy Lantry and Planning Commission Chair Brian Alton communicating the TF’s request that they defer any

action regarding the Critical Area Amendments, at least as they relate to the Ford Site, until the TF has completed its work.

Several TF members also asked for more information on why the Critical Area Task Force made the recommendations they did for this site (and other parts of the Critical Area). Co-chair Bill Klein said that the questions about the applicability of the Critical Area Regulations were akin to similar questions about the draft Highland District Plan. This would be discussed further later.

The consultants ended by stating that they would consider and present information in their initial assessment on the critical area height restrictions, the airport glide path, land use regulations, and traffic flows.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM.